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October 19, 2021

Coastal Resources Management Council
Oliver Stedman Government Center
4808 Tower Hill Road, Suite 116
Wakefield, RI 02879

Subject: Lower Kickemuit Reservoir Dam Removal
File#: 2021-08-102

Save The Bay strongly supports the Bristol County Water Authority's proposed dam removal of the Lower Kickemuit Reservoir Dam to restore the Kickemuit River estuary. The removal of the Lower Kickemuit Reservoir Dam will provide ecological and community resiliency benefits by restoring a tidal estuary and creating an unimpeded salt marsh migration corridor. The removal of the lower dam in coordination with the removal of the Upper Kickemuit Reservoir Dam will restore the hydrologic connection of the Kickemuit River with the estuary while increasing flood storage capacity of the wetlands and enhancing habitat for estuarine and anadromous species.

Currently, the Lower Kickemuit impoundment experiences regular tidal flooding during higher tide events and has converted to a brackish system based upon water quality monitoring data collected in 2020 and 2021 by Bristol County Water Authority (BCWA) through URI's Watershed Watch program. This data also documented low oxygen conditions that create degraded habitats for fish and aquatic life. The brackish waters and low oxygen levels have prevented the return of spawning river herring, despite the construction of a fish ladder at the lower dam in 2007.

The removal of these obstructions to tidal flow, coupled with anticipated sea level rise, will restore salt and brackish marsh habitat in both the lower and upper impoundments and will create an area for salt marsh migration with sea level rise. Based on the CRMC's 2015 Sea Level Rise Affecting Marsh Migration maps, under the 1', 3', and 5' sea level rise scenarios there will be a significant area of marsh migration in the low-lying uplands and freshwater wetlands surrounding the impoundments – one of the largest undeveloped areas for marsh migration in Rhode Island. This marsh migration corridor bordering the upper impoundment is entirely protected open space by BCWA or the Town of Warren and the majority of land on the eastern side of the lower impoundment is protected.

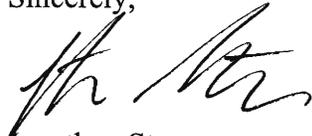
The removal of both the upper and lower dams and RIDOT's commitment to elevating and resizing the culverts of Schoolhouse Road downstream of the Upper Kickemuit Reservoir Dam is a model ecological resiliency project that combines habitat and water quality restoration with community resiliency. This habitat resilience project meets the State of Rhode Island's goals outlined in the Resilient Rhody report and has required interagency coordination with multiple local, state and federal partners including the Town of Warren, RI Department of Transportation, RIDEM Division of Dam Safety and



Division of Fish and Wildlife, the Department of Health, the state's Chief Resiliency Officer, and NOAA's Restoration Center.

Save The Bay has worked closely with BCWA over the last five years on restoring the ecological health of the Kickemuit River and will continue to provide staff time on project outreach, water quality and habitat assessment in coordination with BCWA staff. We are committed to continuing to partner with BCWA and our local, state and federal project partners through the construction, monitoring and adaptive management phase of this restoration and climate resilience project.

Sincerely,



Jonathan Stone
Executive Director





October 21, 2021

Jeff Wills, Executive Director
Coastal Resources Management Council
Oliver Stedman Government Center
4808 Tower Hill Road, Suite 116
Wakefield, RI 02879

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File#: 2021-08-102

Dear Mr. Willis,

I am writing on behalf of the Kickemuit River Council in support of the removal of the Lower Kickemuit River Dam in coordination with the removal of the Upper Kickemuit Reservoir Dam. The Kickemuit River Council is the state designated watershed council for the Kickemuit River watershed and has been actively working to restore the habitat and water quality of the Kickemuit River since it was founded in 1973. Members of the Council have been part of the Bristol County Water Authority's dam removal committee during the assessment and design phase of these dam removal projects.

The Bristol County Water Authority's proposed plan to remove the Lower and Upper Kickemuit River Dams will restore this tidal estuary, improve water quality in the degraded impoundments, improve habitat conditions for estuary dependent fish species and provide access for river herring to reach spawning habitat. Once the dams are removed, the estuary will be accessible for kayaking, fishing and bird watching.

We believe the dam removal project will restore the Kickemuit River to its original state and help in the migration of native species back to our waters. I look forward to seeing this project completed for the betterment of our natural resource, the Kickemuit River.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'David Urban'.

David Urban
Kickemuit River Council

